THE NATURE AND VALUE OF UNIVERSAL HISTORY: AN INAUGURAL LECTURE [1789]*

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It is an honor and a pleasure for me, gentlemen, to accompany you from now on in the exploration of a field which discloses to the reflective observer so many objects of instruction, to the man of affairs such excellent models for imitation, to the philosopher such important conclusions, and to everyone alike such rich sources of elevated diversion — the great field of universal history.

* EDITOR'S NOTE. Already the celebrated author of *Die Räuber, Don Karlos,* poems, essays, and other plays, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805) published in 1788 his *Geschichte des Abfalls der vereinigten Niederlande von der spanischen Regierung,* and was almost immediately, if rather coolly, recommended by Goethe for an unpaid professorship at Jena. Appointed to this post at the age of twenty-nine, Schiller delivered his inaugural lecture — published in Wieland's *Teutscher Merkur* (November 1789) as "*Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?*" — on May 26th, 1789. The lecture was a great success with students, who overflowed the largest lecture-hall in Jena, but for reasons the lecture wastes no time in making clear, it did not endear Schiller to his new colleagues. Although he remained a productive historical writer for several years, Schiller attracted few fee-paying students and became quickly disenchanted as a professor, never recapturing the fine rapture of his first academic hour.

It was not until 1791 that Schiller seriously studied Kant's critical philosophy. But before coming to Jena he had already read, at the recommendation of Reinhold, Jena's Kantian professor of philosophy, both Kant's "*Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*" and "*Muthmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte,*" echoes of both of which appear in this lecture. R. G. Collingwood, after a highly dubious classification of Schiller's lecture as Romantic — rather than Enlightenment — history, discusses approvingly Schiller's improvements on Kant's ideas, "owing no doubt to his actual experience of historical work." (*The Idea of History* [London, 1946], 105.)

The present translation is based on the text of the Säkular-Ausgabe (Stuttgart, 1904-05), XIII, 3-24. A partial bibliography: Friedrich Ueberweg, *Schiller als Historiker und Philosoph* (Leipzig, 1884); Arnold Littman, *Schillers Geschichtsphilosophie* (Langensalza, 1926); Friedrich Meinecke, *Schiller und der Individualitätsgedanke* (Leipzig, 1937); Walter Grossman, "Schiller's Philosophy of History in his Jena Lectures of 1789-90," *PMLA* 69 (1954), 156-172; Benno von Wiese, *Schiller* (Stuttgart, 1959), Ch. 15; Deric Regin, *Freedom and Dignity: The Historical and Philosophical Thought of Schiller* (The Hague, 1965).

Other CLASSICS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY published by this journal are: James Fitzjames Stephen, "The Study of History [1861]," *History and Theory,* I (1961), 186-202; Jean Gaulmier, "Volney et ses *Leçons d'Histoire* [1795]," *ibid.,* II (1962), 52-65; *Craig's Rules of Historical Evidence* [1699], *ibid.,* III (1964), *Beiheft* 4; Giovanni Gentile, "Eighteenth-Century Historical Methodology: De Soria's *Institutiones* [1741]," *ibid.,* IV (1965), 315-327; Wilhelm von Humboldt, "On the Historian's Task," *ibid.,* VI (1967), 57-71.

The sight of so many excellent young men, gathered here eager for knowledge and already revealing the talents which the approaching era will need, makes my duty a pleasure, but also makes me sensible of the burden and importance of that duty. The greater the gift with which I can present you — and what greater has any man to give than truth? — the more care I must take that its value does not diminish at my hands. The more lively and unsullied the spirit with which you receive it in this most fortunate of times, and the more quickly your youthful sentiments catch fire, the greater is my responsibility to keep that enthusiasm which truth alone has the right to incite from being dissipated on fraud and deception.

The realm of history is fertile and comprehensive; it embraces the whole moral world. It accompanies man through everything he experiences, through all the changing forms of thought, through his folly and wisdom, his depravity and glory; it must render the account of everything he has given and received. There is no one among you to whom history does not have something important to say. However different the paths of your future vocations, somewhere they will link up with history. But one vocation you have in common, the task which you brought with you into the world: to cultivate yourselves as men — and it is just to men that history speaks.

But, gentlemen, before I can undertake to determine more exactly your expectations of this field of study and to discuss its connection with the proper purpose of your various studies, it is not superfluous for us to come to an understanding about what this purpose is. To begin by settling this question, in what seems to me a fit and proper manner for inaugurating our future academic collaboration, will enable me to direct your attention at once to the most worthy part of world history.

Quite different are the plans of study which the bread-and-butter scholar and the philosopher lay out for themselves. The one and only concern of the former is to satisfy the conditions by which he can qualify for an appointment and enjoy its rewards; he puts his intellectual ability to work only in order to improve his material position and to gratify his petty craving for recognition. Such a man embarks on an academic career with no more important concern than to separate as completely as possible the fields of study which he calls "professional" from all those which attract the intellect purely for their own sake. Every moment spent on the latter he counts as taken away from his future profession, and never forgives himself this theft. All his diligence is focused on the demands made of him by the future master of his fate, and he believes he has done all there is to be done when, having qualified, he is no longer afraid of him. When he has skimmed through his course of study and reached his goal he gets rid of his study guides — for what good are they any more? His greatest concern now is to show off his accumulated pearls of wisdom, and to make sure by all means that they are not devalued. Every

extension of his discipline is disquieting, because it costs him new work or makes his past work useless. Every important innovation frightens him, for it destroys the old schooling which he acquired with such labor; all the work of his past life is put in danger of being lost. Who has protested reforms more than the company of bread-and-butter scholars? Who more than they has impeded the progress of salutary revolutions in the realm of learning? Any light that by the good fortune of talent is kindled in any field of knowledge makes their shabbiness visible. They oppose it bitterly, maliciously, desperately, because in defending the academic system they are fighting for their lives. Therefore there is no more implacable enemy than a bread-and-butter scholar, no more envious colleague, no one readier to brand dissent as heresy. The less satisfying his scholarship is to him in itself, the greater his demand for external rewards; he measures the merit of the manual laborer and of the intellectual alike by the amount of toil expended. Therefore no one complains more about the thanklessness of his work than a bread-and-butter scholar; he expects his reward not in the currency of ideas but in reputation, in preferment, and in tenure. Who is more unhappy than a bread-and-butter scholar who is disappointed in these hopes? He has lived, watched, and worked in vain; in vain he has sought truth, if truth is not convertible into gold, into celebrity, or into the favor of princes.

How pitiable the man who wants and makes nothing higher with the noblest tools, science and art, than what a day-laborer does with the most common! Who in the realm of perfect freedom carries with him the soul of a slave! More pitiable still is the young man of ability whose promising career is diverted into this dismal byway as a result of pernicious teaching and example, who allows himself to be persuaded to rally to this wretched narrowness as his future profession. Soon enough his specialty will disgust him as piecework, desires will awaken within him which it cannot satisfy, and his talent will mutiny against his vocation. Now everything he does seems fragmentary to him; he sees no purpose to his activity and yet he cannot endure purposelessness. He is crushed by the wearying details of his work because he cannot set against them the resolution which accompanies only clear understanding and the anticipation of success. He feels himself cut off, torn away from the interdependence of things, because he has failed to relate his work to the world as a whole. Once a glimmer of light from a finer culture illuminates the nakedness of his jurisprudence to the lawyer, he abandons it, instead of striving to become innovative and creative and to repair from his own resources the defects discovered in it. The doctor is at odds with his own profession as soon as important failures show him the unreliability of his methods, and the theologian loses respect for his as soon as his belief in the infallibility of his system wavers.

How entirely differently does the philosopher conduct himself! As carefully

as the bread-and-butter scholar keeps his discipline clear of everything extraneous, so the philosopher endeavors to expand his, and to restore its connections with the others — I say "restore," because one discipline has been distinguished from another only by boundaries created by the analytic understanding. Where the bread-and-butter scholar puts asunder, the philosopher joins together. He has early reached the conviction that in the realm of understanding, as in the domain of sensation, everything is interconnected, and his active drive for coherence cannot remain satisfied with fragments. All his efforts are directed toward perfecting his knowledge; in divine discontent he cannot rest until he has ordered all his ideas into a coherent whole, until he locates himself in the exact center of his art, of his science, and from this vantage point surveys with satisfaction its territory. New discoveries in the field of his activity, which are disheartening to the bread-and-butter scholar, delight the philosophical mind. Perhaps they fill a gap which had disfigured the developing totality of his ideas, or fit the last, still missing stone into the edifice of his ideas and complete it. But, on the other hand, should they demolish it — should a new set of ideas, or a new natural phenomenon, or a newly discovered physical law lay waste the structure of his discipline — yet truth is dearer to him than his system, and he will gladly exchange the old defective model for a new and more pleasing one. Indeed, even if no external blow shakes his edifice, he himself, compelled by a ceaselessly operating drive for improvement, is the first to take it apart in order to put it together again more perfectly. Through ever new and ever more gratifying forms of thought the philosophical spirit advances to greater excellence, while the bread-and-butter scholar, in eternal paralysis of spirit, stands guard over the barren monotony of his scholasticism.

There is no fairer judge of the merits of others than the philosopher. Perspicacious and inventive in making use of every technique, he is also just in giving credit to the originator of even the least of them. Every mind works to his purpose, as every mind works against the bread-and-butter specialist. He knows how to make his own everything that happens and is thought around him; among reflective minds there is close common possession of intellectual products, and in the kingdom of truth what one acquires is everyone's gain. The bread-and-butter scholar barricades himself against all his neighbors, grudging them light and sun, and anxiously guards the dilapidated barriers which protect him so ineffectively against conquering reason. Every undertaking of the bread-and-butter scholar must borrow motivation and encouragement from outside itself, while the philosophical mind finds motivation and reward in its own object and in its own efforts. With how much more spirit can the philosopher set about his work, how much keener is his zeal, how much more enduring and resolute his activity, as his work diminishes through work itself. Since he always has something of magnitude in view, even small

details achieve stature under his creative hand, while the bread-and-butter scholar sees even in great things only what is petty. Not what he does but how he does it distinguishes the philosophical mind. Wherever he may stand and work, he stands always at the center of the whole; and however far the object of his inquiry takes him from the rest of his colleagues, they are still akin and close to him through the sympathetic resonance of their minds; he encounters them where all clear-headed persons meet up with one another. Shall I pursue this description further, gentlemen, or may I hope that you have already decided which of the two portraits I have held up before you is the one you want to take as your model? It depends on your choice between them whether the study of universal history is advisable for you or not. Only with the second model do I have anything to do; for if one essays to put the first one to use, knowledge may remove itself all too far from its ultimate purpose, and one will pay dearly in effort for small reward.

If we are agreed on the perspective from which the value of a discipline can be determined, I can turn to the concept of universal history, the subject of today's lecture.

The discoveries which our European seafarers have made in distant oceans and on remote shores afford us a spectacle which is as instructive as it is entertaining. They show us societies arrayed around us at various levels of development, as an adult might be surrounded by children of different ages, reminded by their example of what he himself once was and whence he started. A wise hand seems to have preserved these savage tribes until such time as we have progressed sufficiently in our own civilization to make useful application of this discovery, and from this mirror to recover the lost beginning of our race. But how embarrassing and dismal is the picture of our own childhood presented in these peoples! And it is not even at the earliest level that we perceive them. In the beginning man was even more pitiful. What we find are already peoples — political societies — but man must have achieved social organization only as a result of extraordinary exertions.

What do travel writers tell us now about these savages? Many have been found to be unacquainted with the most elementary skills: without iron, without the plow, some even without fire. Many still compete with wild animals for food and shelter, and, with many, language has scarcely progressed from animal sounds to intelligible signs. Here there is not even the simplest marriage tie; there no knowledge of property; here the indolent mind cannot learn even from experience that is repeated daily; savages have been seen to abandon carelessly their sleeping-places, because it did not occur to them that tomorrow they would sleep again. War, however, is made by all of them, and not infrequently the victor's prize is the flesh of the defeated enemy. Others, familiar with some of the amenities of life, have reached a higher level of

civilization, but their slavery and despotism still present a horrible picture. There one can see an African despot selling his subjects for a spot of brandy; here they are slaughtered on his grave, in order to serve him in the underworld. Pious simplemindedness prostrates itself there before a ludicrous fetish, and here before a dreadful monster; man pictures himself in his gods. However deeply he is oppressed at one extreme by slavery, stupidity, and superstition, he is just as miserable at the other extreme of lawless freedom. Always ready to attack or defend himself, startled by every noise, the savage timidly strains his ears in the wilderness; anything novel is his enemy, and woe to the stranger shipwrecked on his coast! No friendly hearth will greet him with its smoke, no privilege of refreshing hospitality will he enjoy. But even where men have advanced from hostile solitude to social organization, from poverty to comfort, from fearfulness to enjoyment, how strange and barbarous they appear to us! Their rude taste seeks pleasure in narcotic stupefaction, beauty in distortion, renown in extravagance; even their virtues arouse our aversion, and what they count as their greatest happiness can excite in us only pity or disgust.

Thus we were too. Caesar and Tacitus found us not much better eighteen hundred years ago.

What are we now? Let **me** pause a moment at the age in which we live, the contemporary state of the **world** we inhabit.

Human industry has cultivated the land, and has overcome its resistance by perseverance and skill. There land has been reclaimed from the sea, here water brought to the desert. Man has mingled climatic zones and seasons, and acclimated the tender plants of the East to his own more inclement weather. As he has borne Europe to the West Indies and the South Seas, so he has resurrected Asia in Europe. A more cheerful sky smiles now over the Teutonic forests, rent by man's hand and opened to the sunlight, and the vines of Asia are mirrored in the waters of the Rhine. On its banks rise populous cities whose gay life is filled with work and play. Here a man enjoys the fruits of his labor in peace and security among a million others, who otherwise would fear to sleep because of a single neighbor. Through wise laws he has regained the equality which he lost by entering into society. From the blind compulsion of chance and dire need he has escaped to the gentler domain of rule by covenant, and has yielded up the freedom of the beast of prey in order to preserve the nobler freedom of man. To his benefit his anxieties have been put away, his labors shared with others. Imperious necessity no longer ties him to the plowshare, and the enemy no longer summons him from the plow to the battlefield to defend hearth and country. With the arms of the countryman he fills his barns, and with the weapons of the warrior he guards his territory. The law watches over his property — and he retains the priceless right to decide on his duty for himself.

How many inventions of art have there been, how many marvels of

industry, how much illumination in every field of learning, since man has no longer dissipated his powers uselessly in wretched self-defense, since he has chosen to put up with necessity which he cannot entirely escape, since he has won the precious privilege freely to direct his own potential and to follow the call of his genius! What industrious activity everywhere, since the diversity of wants gave new wings to the spirit of invention and opened up new realms for enterprise! The boundaries which states and nations set up in their hostility and egoism have been pierced. All reflective men today are joined as citizens of the world, and all the light of the century can now illuminate the mind of a contemporary Galileo or Erasmus.

Since the time when the laws descended to minister to human weakness, man has also come to conform to the laws. With their help he has become more pacific, as once he ran wild under them: the barbarousness of crime gradually follows the barbarity of their punishments into oblivion. A great step toward improvement has taken place in that the laws are virtuous even though men themselves as yet are not. When the compulsory duties imposed on men are reduced, they are replaced by morality. Whoever is not deterred by punishment or held in check by conscience is now restrained by the laws of decency and respect.

It is true that even in our age there are many barbarous survivals from the past, born of accident and violence, which should not have been perpetuated in the age of reason. But how much order has human reason imprinted even on these barbarous remains of the centuries of antiquity and the middle ages! How harmless, indeed how useful, has reason often rendered those things which it did not yet dare to overthrow! It was on the rude foundation of feudal anarchy that Germany erected its system of political and religious freedom. The shadow-image of the Roman Emperor, preserved on this side of the Alps, does the world infinitely more good now than its dreadful original did in ancient Rome — for it holds together in concord a useful system of nations; the other subjected the most effective of human powers to slavish uniformity. Even as to our religion — so misrepresented at the faithless hands of those through whom it has descended to us — who can fail to recognize in it the ennobling influence of a sounder philosophy? Our Leibnizes and Lockes have done as much for Christian dogma and morality as the brush of a Raphael or a Correggio has done for sacred history.

Finally, with what sincerity and with what skill have our countries been made interdependent! How much more enduring is their fraternization compelled by circumstances than it was before through solemn treaties! Peace is now guarded by the perpetual armament of war, and the self-interest of one state leads it to protect the well-being of another. The European society of states seems transformed into a great family; its members may have their feuds, but no longer do they tear each other limb from limb.

What contrasting pictures! Who would suppose that the refined European of the eighteenth century is only a more advanced brother of the Red Indian and of the ancient Celt? All these skills, artistic instincts, experiences, all these creations of reason have been implanted and developed in man in a matter of a few thousand years; all these marvels of invention, these tremendous works of industry have been called forth from him. What brought them to life? What elicited them? What conditions of life did man traverse in ascending from that extreme to this, from the unsociable life of the cave dweller to the life of the thinker, of the civilized man of the world? Universal world-history answers these questions.

How incomparably dissimilar does a given people in a given region appear to us if we observe it at different points of time! No less striking is the difference among races contemporary in time but in different geographical areas. What a variety of customs, political structures, and morals! What swift alternation of darkness and light, of anarchy and order, of prosperity and poverty, even if we inspect only men in the small continent which is Europe! On the banks of the Thames man is free and his freedom is due only to himself; here, he is invincible among his Alps, there unvanquished amid his canals and marshes. But on the Vistula man is powerless and wretched as a result of discord, beyond the Pyrenees powerless and wretched as a result of sloth. Prosperous and blessed in Amsterdam without agriculture — indigent and miserable in the unexploited paradises of the Ebro valley. Here, two distant peoples who, although separated by an ocean, have become neighbors through necessity, industry and political bonds; there, the inhabitants of opposite banks of a river immeasurably separated by different liturgies! What led the might of Spain across the Atlantic to the heart of America, but not across even the Tagus or the Guadiana? What preserved so many thrones in Italy and Germany, while in France all but one vanished? Universal history resolves these questions.

Even the fact that we find ourselves assembled at this moment, at just this level of national culture, with this language, these customs, these civic advantages, this amount of freedom of conscience, is the outcome, perhaps, of all the past events of the world; the whole history of the world at least would be needed to explain this very moment. In order that we come together as Christians, this religion must have emerged from Judaism after innumerable changes had prepared the way and must have found the Roman Empire exactly as it did, in order to spread swiftly and victoriously throughout the world and ultimately to ascend the throne of the Caesars. Our rude forebears in the Thuringian forests must have succumbed to the superior power of the Franks, in order to adopt their religion. The growing wealth of the clergy, the ignorance of laymen, and the weakness of rulers had to seduce and encourage the clergy to abuse its authority, and transform its quiet moral force into a secular sword.

The hierarchy, in the persons of Gregory and Innocent, had to pour upon mankind all its abominations, in order that the increasing moral corruption and the crying scandal of spiritual tyranny could challenge an intrepid Augustinian monk to give the signal for revolt, and wrest half of Europe from the Roman hierarchy — all this must have happened for us to come together here as Protestant Christians. And for this to happen, our prince Charles V must have exacted religious peace by force of arms; a Gustavus Adolphus must have avenged the breach of this peace; and a new universal peace must have established it forever. Cities had to rise in Italy and Germany, open their gates to commerce, break the chains of serfdom, seize the scales of justice from the hands of unenlightened despots, and through a military league keep alert watch — all this must have happened for business and trade to have flourished and devoted their surplus to the civilized arts, for the state to respect the contributions of the farmer, and for the enduring welfare of all men to come to fruition through the benevolent middle classes, the creators of our entire culture. Germany's emperors had to exhaust themselves in century-long struggles against the Holy See, against their vassals and against ambitious neighbors, and Europe had to leave its dangerous overpopulation behind in Asian graves. The defiant feudal lords had to be bled of their spirit of rebellion by lethal club-law, crusades and pilgrimages, if the chaotic entanglements were to sort themselves out and the contending national forces to be brought into that peaceful balance of power of which our present tranquility is the reward. If our minds were to be wrested from the ignorance in which spiritual and secular coercion had imprisoned them, then the long-smothered seed of learning had to sprout anew among its most implacable persecutors, and an Al-Mamun had to compensate the world of knowledge for the plunder which Omar had perpetrated upon it. The unbearable misery of barbarism had to drive our forebears from the bloody judgments of God to human tribunals, devastating plagues had to recall medicine to scientific inquiry, the idleness of the monks had to make amends from afar for the evil they had done, and by their secular activity to preserve in the cloisters the fragmented remains of the Augustan age until the era of the printing press. The oppressed spirit of northern barbarians had to be elevated by Greek and Roman models, and learning had to ally itself with the Muses and Graces if it were to reach men's hearts and deserve to be called the educator of humanity. But would Greece have borne a Thucydides, a Plato, and an Aristotle, or Rome a Horace, a Cicero, a Virgil, and a Livy, if these two states had not risen to those heights of political achievement which in fact they attained? In a word — if their entire preceding history had not been as it was? How many innovations, discoveries, and revolutions both political and ecclesiastical had to coincide in order to give these new and as yet fragile seeds of science and the arts a chance to grow and flourish! How many wars had to be waged, how many

alliances formed, dissolved, and formed anew to bring Europe at last to the principle of peace, which alone allows states and citizens alike to pursue their own interests and to unite their powers in pursuing a rational goal!

Even in the daily routine of home life we cannot avoid our indebtedness to past centuries; the most dissimilar periods of human history contribute to our civilization, as do the most remote regions of the world to our luxury. The clothes we wear, the spices in our food and the price we pay for them, many of our most effective medicines, and equally so many novel means of corruption — do they not presuppose the discovery of America by Columbus and the circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope by Vasco da Gama?

Thus there extends between the present moment and the beginnings of the human race a long chain of events which interlock as cause and effect. Only an infinite intellect could survey them in their entirety; men are subject to more narrow limits. 1. A countless number of these occurrences either have not been witnessed or observed by anyone, or have not been preserved by any record. To this class belongs everything which antedates the human race itself and the invention of signs. The source of all history is tradition and the organ of tradition is language. The entire pre-linguistic epoch, consequential as it has been for the world, is lost to the history of the world. 2. But after language had been invented, and thereby the possibility existed to describe and more widely relate the things that had happened, such communication took place to begin with in the uncertain and unstable form of legends. An event would be transmitted from mouth to mouth through a long sequence of generations, and as its modes of communication changed and were changed, so it had to suffer change along with them. The living tradition or the oral legend is therefore a very unreliable source for history, and in consequence all events before the use of writing are as good as lost to world-history. 3. But writing itself is not imperishable; time and accident have destroyed countless remains of antiquity, and only a few fragments have survived from earlier times into the age of printing. By far the greater number of them are lost to world-history together with the information they could give us. 4. Among the few things which time has spared, finally, most have been distorted and made unrecognizable by the passion, the want of intelligence, and not infrequently the very genius of their reporters. The most ancient historical remains arouse our suspicions; we are not free from them even when dealing with a chronicle of our own time. If we have trouble in examining the witnesses to an event which occurred just recently, among our own people and in the city where we live, and in disentangling the truth from their contradictory accounts — what confidence can we bring to the study of nations and ages which are even more remote from us in the strangeness of their customs than they are distant in time? The small sum of events which remains after the foregoing factors have

been subtracted is the subject matter of history in its widest sense. What part and how much of this historical material belongs to universal history?

From the total sum of these events, the universal historian picks out those which have had on the contemporary state of the world and on the condition of the generation now alive an influence which is essential, undeniable, and easy to discern. It is thus the relevance of an historical fact to the contemporary state of the world to which attention must be paid in assembling materials for world-history. World-history therefore proceeds upon a principle which directly reverses the world-order itself. The real series of events descends from the origin of things to their most recent state, while the universal historian moves in the opposite way from the most recent state of the world up to the origin of things. If he ascends in his mind from the current year and century to the one just past and there notes the events which elucidate those that follow next; if he has in this way proceeded step by step up to the beginning, not of the world, since no signpost can direct him there, but the beginning of historical remains; he is then at liberty to return on the path he has made and, guided by the facts he has already marked out, to descend without obstruction or difficulty from the beginning of the record down to the most recent times. This is world-history as we have it, and as it will be presented to you.

Because world-history is so dependent on the wealth or poverty of its sources, there must be as many gaps in history as there are empty stretches in what has been handed down. However uniform, necessary and determined the way in which changes in the world develop out of each other, in history they fit together only in a disconnected and fortuitous way. Thus between the course of the world and the course of world-history there is remarkable incongruity. One might compare the former with a continuously flowing river, of whose waves only one here and there can be seen in the light of world-history. Furthermore, just as it can easily happen that the relevance of a remote event to present circumstances is more noticeable than its connection with other prior or simultaneous events, so it is likewise unavoidable that events with the closest of connections with recent times not infrequently appear isolated in their own age. An example of this would be the origin of Christianity and especially of Christian moral doctrines. The Christian religion is of such abundant importance in the contemporary world that its appearance becomes the most significant fact for world-history. But neither in the age in which it appeared, nor in the people among whom it came into being, can one find (for lack of sources) a satisfactory explanation of its appearance.

So our world-history would become nothing but an aggregate of fragments and be unworthy to be called a science. But now philosophical understanding comes to its aid, and, by joining these fragments together by artificial links, transforms the aggregate into a system, a rationally coherent whole. The

verification of this procedure lies in the uniformity and immutable unity of the laws of physical and human nature; it is because of this unity that the events of the most remote antiquity are repeated in the most recent periods whenever the concourse of external circumstances is similar. Thus it is that we can infer backwards from phenomena within our area of observation to those that are lost to sight in unrecorded ages, and thereby diffuse a certain amount of light. The method of inference from analogies is in history as elsewhere a powerful instrument, but it must be justified by a cogent purpose, and practiced with as much care as judgment.

The philosophical mind cannot long detain itself with the subject matter of world-history before a new impulse is activated. This impulse strives for harmony and irresistibly nags the philosopher to assimilate everything around him to his own rational nature and to transform every phenomenon in his experience into the highest reality he knows — into thoughts. Thus the more often and the more successfully he renews the attempt to connect past and present, the more disposed he will be to put what he sees as the interdependence of cause and effect into a relationship of means and ends. He begins to remove one phenomenon after another from the domain of blind chance, from freedom from law, and to fit it as a link into an harmonious totality (which, to be sure, exists only in his imagination). Soon he finds it difficult to persuade himself that this sequence of phenomena, which in his conception has acquired so much regularity and purpose, has nothing like these characteristics in reality; it is hard for him to restore to the blind rule of necessity what had begun to acquire such a clear form in the borrowed light of reason. Thus he transplants this harmony from himself to the nature of things; that is, he imports a rational purpose into the course of the world, and a teleological principle into world-history. Ranging once more through world-history with this principle, he tests it against every phenomenon that crosses the stage of this great theater. He sees his principle confirmed by a thousand facts in agreement with it, and contradicted by just as many others; but as long as important links are missing in the sequence of historical change, as long as fate withholds from us the final understanding of so many events, he will declare the question open, and whatever opinion offers deeper satisfaction to the understanding and greater bliss to the heart will win out.

One hardly has to be reminded that a world-history on this latter plan is to be expected only in the future. A premature application of so grand a standard could easily lead the historical researcher to do violence to events, thus removing this happy epoch for the study of world-history even further — by hastening to bring it about. But attention cannot be drawn too early to these illuminating and yet so neglected aspects of world-history, whereby it is associated with the highest object of all human efforts. Merely the prospect of this — if only potential — goal ought to give to the inquirer's diligence an

invigorating stimulus as well as agreeable relaxation. Even the smallest labor will be important for him if he sees himself on the way, or even just guiding a later successor on the way, toward solving the problem of how the world is constituted and encountering the finest operations of the intellect at its best.

And treated in such a way, gentlemen, the study of world-history will prove for you an occupation as interesting as it is useful. It will kindle light in your understanding, and salutary enthusiasm in your hearts. It will wean your minds from vulgar and trivial opinions on moral matters; and, in presenting before your eyes the great panorama of ages and peoples, it will correct the rash decisions of the moment and the narrow judgments of self-interest. While it accustoms man to think of himself as one with the entire past, and to press on with his conclusions into the distant future, at the same time it conceals the limitations of birth and death, by which man's life is so narrowly and oppressively circumscribed, and by an optical illusion extends his short existence into endlessness and imperceptibly makes the individual one with his species.

Man transforms himself and departs from the stage; his opinions change and depart with him. History alone remains on the scene continuously, an immortal citizen of all nations and ages. Like Homer's Zeus she gazes down with equal serenity on the bloody works of war and on peaceful people, who innocently obtain their nourishment from the milk of their herds. However irregularly man's freedom appears to be governing the course of the world, she calmly observes the confused spectacle; for her far-reaching gaze detects already from afar how this erratically meandering freedom is being steered along the lines of necessity. What she keeps secret from the guilty conscience of a Gregory or a Cromwell she hastens to reveal to humanity: "that man in his self-interest may indeed pursue lower purposes, but unwittingly advances more excellent ones."

No false gleam will dazzle her, no prejudice of the time distract her, since she experiences the ultimate fate of all things. Everything that comes to an end has lasted, as far as she is concerned, an equally short time: she keeps fresh the olive wreaths that were fairly won and shatters the obelisks that were erected by vanity. By analyzing the subtle mechanism by which the quiet hand of nature ever since the beginning of the world has developed human powers according to plan, and indicating precisely how this great plan of nature has been served within each epoch, she restores the true standard of happiness and merit, which the reigning delusion of each century falsifies in a different manner. She cures us of exaggerated admiration for antiquity and of childish nostalgia for former times; and in making us aware of our own possessions, keeps us from wishing for the return of the eulogized golden ages of Alexander and Augustus.

To prepare for our human century, although unwittingly and unintentionally, has been the endeavor of all past ages. Every treasure which industry

and talent, reason and experience have finally gathered throughout the long age of the world, is ours. Only from history will you learn to value those goods, the gratitude for which familiarity and untroubled possession so readily take away from us: costly and precious goods, to which the blood of the best and noblest clings, and which had to be won by the hard work of so many generations! And who among you, if he combines a lucid mind with a sensitive heart, could be mindful of this high obligation without the quiet wish that he might repay to the coming generation the debt which he can no longer discharge to the last? A noble longing must glow within us to add from our own resources our contribution to the rich legacy of truth, morality, and freedom which we have received from former ages and must deliver richly increased to the ages to come; and to fasten to this imperishable chain, which winds through all the generations of men, our own fleeting existence. No matter how different the vocations which await you in ordinary life — you can all contribute something! For each meritorious service a path to immortality is opened — to true immortality, I mean, where the deed lives and presses onward even though the name of its author should be left behind.